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Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650–1990

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writing. He grew up along the railroad in Callender, Fort Dodge, and Spencer, Iowa, and his long association with the company is reflected in his often eloquent writing about its legendarily loyal employees, the details of its operations, and the sadness, however unsurprising, of its demise. At times the amount of detail can be overwhelming—this is not a book for the casual reader—yet the fruits of his voluminous research will be useful to those interested in not just the M&StL but midwestern economic development and other area railroads as well.

I have two gripes, the first minor: Hofsommer has the annoying habit of ascribing unknowable emotions and expressions to people and inanimate entities. Thus, events “put a pucker” or a “frown” on someone’s face; railroads variously “sigh,” “sputter,” and “fuss”; individuals “bellow,” “bluster” and “growl”; periodicals “moan” and “intone.” It’s fine to liven up one’s writing, but too much “color” becomes distracting. Second, there is no all-time map of the M&StL, showing it at its peak mileage. A map of the railroad’s currently surviving line segments would have been particularly useful. That said, however, Don Hofsommer has written an extremely informative, detailed, and colorful look at a railroad, a region, and an era.

Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650–1990, by John J. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith, and Randy Widdis. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. vii, 298 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliographical essays, bibliography, appendix, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Mel Prewitt teaches at Scott Community College. His research and writing have focused on the impact of emigrants from the midwestern United States on the society and politics of the Canadian prairie.

Four authors have shared the daunting task of describing the development of a region that seems to defy recognition and cohesion. Equipped with diverse backgrounds, both academic and national, this team charts the changing economic and political climate of the transnational Great Lakes region from both sides of the political boundary, bringing historical and geographical disciplines to bear on 340 years of history of the borderland.

Regions are often defined by grand geographical parameters such as rivers and mountain ranges. At other times, regions are distinct ethnic homelands. The Great Lakes region has nothing to compare to such markings of specificity and permanence. Even some who teach regional cultural geography seem to question its reality or relevance in a modern world. These four gallant researchers diligently build a solid

case for a regional function and identity that evolves to fit the changing needs and goals of a fluid constituency.

Historian John J. Bukowczyk wrote four of the seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. He sets a solid foundation with a detailed account of the region's Native American, French, and English history as well as American and Canadian national experience. He pays particular attention to the interaction of those groups within the Great Lakes basin and nearby parts of North America.

Central to the region's history is transportation and how that activity contributed to the region's distinctiveness. Transportation played the pivotal role in the area's industrial activity and population growth and movement. The Canadian portion of the Great Lakes economy was hindered by its comparatively small size and consistent shortage of labor and capital. Capital, being somewhat less than perfectly fluid, required government intervention in the form of national policy in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A program of infrastructure development and protective tariffs led to branch manufacturing by American capitalists but did not stop the departure of labor from Canada.

The demographics of international migration is the subject of Nora Faires's chapter, "Leaving the 'Land of the Second Chance.'" Faires cites the nearly complete lack of border regulation for the difficulty in counting these travelers. Without that obvious source, she used census records and local histories to produce the needed information. Those sources provide readers with names to go with the usual statistics. She identifies many representative families and tells their stories. Michigan's available land lured many Canadians, and the growing industries of the upper Midwest continued the draw. Detroit had the most extensive binational hinterland. The excess labor of farm families was drawn to the growing industrial city.

David R. Smith explains that the political significance of the border was established with tariffs, but its social significance remained limited because of the unrestricted movement of capital and labor. The political and economic policies of both nations after 1880 supported the movement of labor from eastern Canada to the United States and the movement of American farmers into the Canadian West. There were industries to be tended and forests to be harvested in Michigan, while the Canadian prairie West was being converted to wheat fields. Public opinion on matters of immigration policy followed political party lines. Smith is sympathetic to the plight of U.S. labor having to compete with immigrants while manufacturers were protected by tariffs. Readers are brought up to date with the description of conditions

under the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Great Lakes region is key to the North American economy, and a superhighway connecting the three NAFTA participants would likely enhance Detroit's importance in international trade. At the same time, such developments, according to Smith, have meant that the border has become a less significant factor in terms of Canadian nationalism.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter is authored by the only Canadian. Randy Widdis, professor of geography at the University of Regina, examines some opposing views of "borderlands" and applies them to the Great Lakes region. Widdis is concerned with the various ways inhabitants view the border: psychologically, economically, and culturally. Widdis also provides a five-page appendix that outlines the sources for his research and their availability, and briefly sketches the important demographic differences among the migrants according to direction and region.

The Great Lakes borderland's relative invisibility compared to, say, the American Southwest or the Golan Heights, is an important reason for it to be better recognized and understood. This volume is valuable to readers interested in North American trade, history, or the relationship between the United States and Canada.

British Buckeyes: The English, Scots, and Welsh in Ohio, 1700–1900, by William E. Van Vugt. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006. xiii, 295 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewer Monica Rico is assistant professor of history at Lawrence University. She has written about British settlers in the Midwest and West.

In *British Buckeyes*, William E. Van Vugt returns to the subject of British emigration to the United States, a topic he ably explored in *Britain to America: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Immigrants to the United States* (1999). In the acknowledgments of the current volume, Van Vugt warmly thanks Charlotte Erickson, the reigning expert on British emigration to the United States, and her influence is clear in this detailed and comprehensive study of the contributions made by British emigrants to Ohio. Drawing extensively on sources in both the United States and Great Britain, Van Vugt demonstrates the important role that the British played in developing Ohio's agriculture, industry, religious life, and educational institutions. These "invisible immigrants" (to use Erickson's classic phrase) blended in easily with native-born white Americans due to their linguistic, religious, and cultural similarities, and for that reason, their place in American history is often disregarded.